Erin Weinstock

Ms. Krafft

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Response Paper 3: Beloved

Slavery was definitely not a shining moment in America’s history. If anything, it was quite the opposite. Nonetheless, it was still part of our history. In Tony Morrison’s novel *Beloved*, she illustrates this undesirable and tormented aspect of our history by means of an extended metaphor through Sethe’s dead daughter who she came to name Beloved. In this book, Morrison uses the motif of the supernatural to explain the significance of how slavery effected and tormented not only the lives of these characters individually, but also how it effected the lives of the millions of people who share this common history.

*Beloved* investigates all aspects of devastation that can be put upon human beings as a result of being enslaved. It also shows how these experiences haunt the people who were affected by it even after they were freed. An example would be any experience Sethe had while working at Sweet Home, which was anything but for her. Anything she can remember from that place manifests itself as a painful and haunting ghost of her past. Thus, she tries as hard as possible to suppress such memories.

In chapter one, a lot about Sethes painful past is described. One instance, in particular was especially painful. One day when she tried to escape Sweet Home to be with her children, she was caught, brutally whipped until the nerves in her back were completely shot, and then had her breast milk taken from her as well. She told the entire story to Paul D from a flashback perspective as a way to relive her painful past. Paul D, attempts as a result to empathize with her in a sexual manner. As he begins to kiss her scars, the house begins to move and the ghost of Sethe’s dead daughter shakes the house and makes her presence known. This in my opinion occurs as a result of reminding the readers, the characters, and society in general of the horrific past that these people had to face as a result of slavery. What happened to Sethe happen to countless women in slavery and Toni Morrison took it upon herself to not only create a story to explain it, but to also show the strife a group of people had to endure as a common ethnic group.

In conclusion in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved,* Morrison uses the motif of the supernatural to explain the significance of how slavery effected and tormented not only the lives of these characters individually, but also how it effected the lives of the millions of people who share this common history. Slavery is known to history as being a horrible time. Using the supernatural as a motif to describe the atrocities that took place during the time of slavery was extremely useful because using something as horrifying as a ghostly premonition to describe it truly showed how horrifying the circumstances that were taking place actually were. Beloved shows how these dynamics flows throughout the novel.